

COMMANDER, US NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

COMMANDER, US FIFTH FLEET

COALITION / JOINT FORCES MARITIME COMPONENT COMMANDER

Area of Responsibility (AOR) Orientation



OVERALL CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED



One historian's view of the area...

“The Middle East is a Politically fractionalized land populated with a jumble of ethnic and religious groups. There are Jews, Arabs, Africans and a smattering of Christians. Each detests the others. Extreme political and theological views prevail. Terrorism and assassination are commonplace. Alliances are momentary, grudges perennial, and neither colonial subjugation nor local autonomy suffices to keep the peace.”

Flavius Josephus 66AD



AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR)

- 25 countries
- 6.43 million square miles
(16.13 million sq kilometers)
- Population: 483+ million
- Ethnic groups: 18
- Languages: 7 major,
hundreds of dialects
- Per capita income:
UAE \$24,000 ... Ethiopia
\$530





AREA OF INTEREST

- This AOR is surrounded by several other high interest countries & regions
- We have to pay attention to them as well





POLITICAL TENSIONS – WHO'S IN CHARGE?

- Depends on the issue and the location
 - Traditional Kingdoms and Emirates
 - Nominal Republics
 - Multinational Organizations
 - International Organizations
 - Regional Organizations
 - Special Cases (*Afghanistan, Somalia*)
 - Component Commanders, JTF, etc.

One part of the challenge in considering cultural aspects of the AOR is the challenge of figuring out who's in charge. While much of the region may appear relatively homogenous at a glance -- Islamic -- the impact of that on a particular nation is moderated or strengthened by the form of government and who's in charge.



CULTURAL TENSIONS

- “Too Many” or “Too Much”
 - Language Groups
 - Religious Groups
 - People (Population issues)
 - Rich and Poor / Have vs. Have Not
 - Westernization/Modernization vs. Tradition

Adding to the confusion of developing an overall orientation to the region is this tension related to what I used to call “Mother’s Rule of ‘Too’” -- remember when you were first learning to drive and you were always going too fast or too slow or too close or too far? The sheer multitude of ethnic, language, religious, economic and other kinds of diversity makes it hard to be too specific.



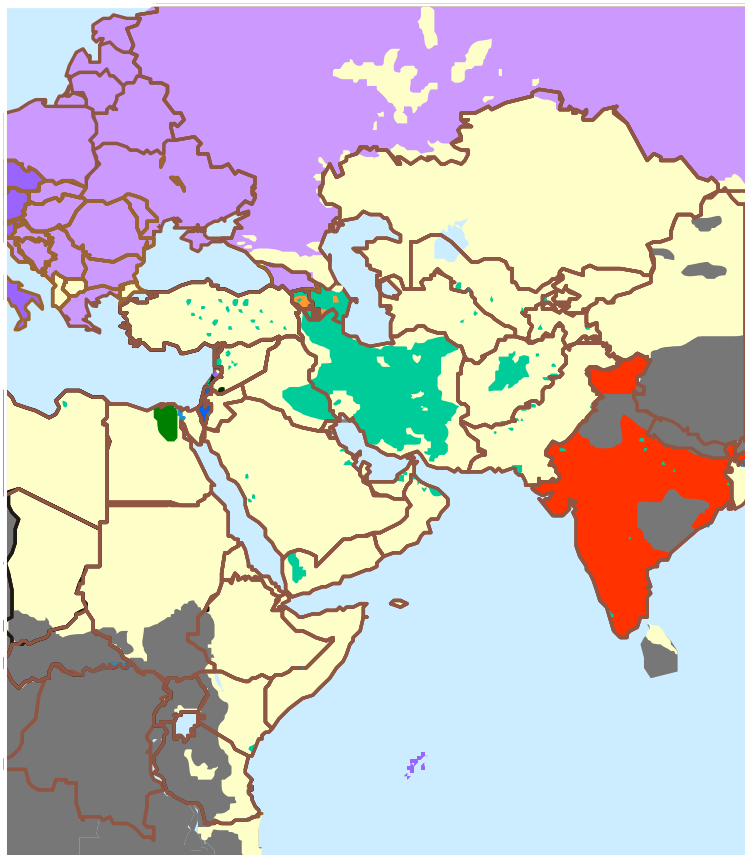
MAJOR ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

- ISLAM
 - Sunni
 - Shi'a
 - Sufi (*found in both Sunni and Shi'a*)
- JUDAISM
 - Ashkenazi ("Western")
 - Sephardi ("Eastern")
 - Sabra (Israel)
- CHRISTIANITY
 - Western
 - Eastern (Orthodox)
- OTHERS
 - Zoroastrian
 - Baha'i
 - Animist

Here's some of the diversity in just one of those areas. Not only do we have the three major world religions plus others, but we have several subsets of each of these -- and further subdivision below this level.



DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIONS IN THE CENTRAL REGION



- Sunni majority
- Shia majority
- Druz majority
- Jewish majority
- Coptic presence
- Armenian Orthodox
- Eastern Orthodox
- Western Christian
- Hindu
- Other



AOR ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUPS

- SEMITIC
 - Arabs
 - Jews
 - Arameans
- IRANIAN
 - Persians
 - Afghans
 - Kurds
 - Baluch
- HAMITIC
 - Berbers
 - Copts
 - Beja
- TURKIC
 - Turks, Turkomen
 - Azeris
 - Qashqa'is
- OTHERS
 - (Armenian/Greek)

Language is another interesting factor in the diversity of the region. “Arabic” is just one part of things. If you’ve ever walked around the souk in Manama, you’ve probably noticed the mix on shop signs. Also, it’s important to realize that there are regional variations in Arabic that are at least as -- or more so -- extreme than the difference between English in London and English in New Orleans.



ISLAM

More on the region's dominant religion and
accompanying culture

*Adapted from a presentation originally developed by
CDR Thomas Harrington, CHC, USNR*



ORIGINS

- Islam originated in Arabia between 609 - 632 A.D. when, as its adherents believe, God (*Allah* in Arabic) revealed his final message to humankind through the prophet Mohammed.



Some information on the slides that follow is from The Macon Telegraph,
“The Religion of Islam,” p. C1, 09/22/01



“ISLAM”

- Word derived from Arabic meaning “peace” or “submission.” Followers of this faith are known as Muslims.
- In practice, the word refers to the Muslim’s full submission to the will of Allah, as revealed to the prophet Mohammed.
- Thus, Islam is one’s whole-hearted acceptance of the wisdom of Allah.





THE STAR AND CRESCENT



- "The star and crescent" was first hoisted on behalf of the Muslims by Mahomet II after the capture of Constantinople in A.D. 1453. Prior to that, it was common to the coats of arms of Christian knights and others of prominent social standing. A star within a crescent was among the recognized badges of Richard I, 250 years before the city of Constantinople fell before the advancing Muslim armies. Christians stopped using the symbol as the Muslim world began to adopt it as their own. *(from <http://users.erols.com/ameen/crescent1.htm>)*



A MAJOR WORLD RELIGION

Though Islam originated in Arabia, not all Muslims are Arabs nor are all Arabs Muslims (*actually, most Muslims are not Arabs*).

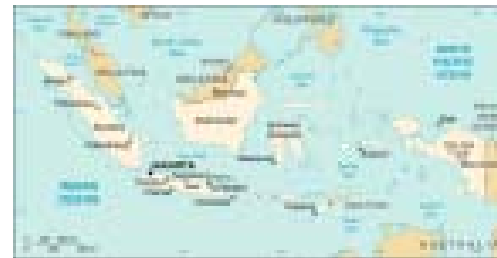
There are more than a billion Muslims in the world, and they live on all continents in more than 120 nations.





LARGEST MUSLIM POPULATIONS

- Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims in the world.
- More than half of the population in Africa is considered Muslim.





SOME KEY ISLAMIC BELIEFS

- One God, Allah
- Islam predates Mohammed.
 - The Creator has periodically chosen human beings to reveal his messages to humankind. They believe these prophets began with Adam and included many others mentioned in the sacred writings of Jews and Christians, including Noah, Abraham, David, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus.
- Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and was a great prophet, but he was not the Messiah.
- The messages and revelations of the earlier prophets culminated in Islam and in Mohammed as the last prophet.

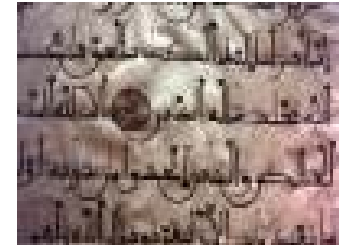


MOHAMMED

- Born in Mecca, A.D. 570. Orphaned at age six, he was raised by an uncle.
- Married a wealthy widow and had 6 children by her, only one of which survived — a daughter, Fatima.
- Believed he received visitations from the angel, Gabriel, when he was 40 and began to receive the *Quran* (Koran).
 - Over the next 23 years Gabriel revealed more of Allah's message to Mohammed, who memorized the revelations and began to share them with others.



THE *QURAN*



- Mohammed's words were passed on in the oral tradition of his Arabic culture.
- About 40 years after his death, they were transcribed in the written form called the *Quran* (Koran).
 - There are 114 chapters (*Suwar*) in the *Quran*, arranged by length from the longest to the shortest.
- Only the Arabic language texts are thought to be without error and authoritative.



TWO SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

- The *Quran* covers all aspects of Muslim life, public and private.
- The *haddith* records traditions of the sayings and actions of Mohammed.



THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

- 1) *Shahadah* –
Declaration of faith
- 2) *Salat* – Daily prayers
(5x/day)
- 3) *Zakat* – Charity (\$)
- 4) *Sawm* – Fasting in
Ramadan
- 5) *Hajj* – Pilgrimage to
Mecca





MECCA

- This is the Ka'ba at Mecca (al-Haram al-Makki al-Sharif), for Muslims the holiest spot on Earth. The focal point in all mosques is aligned with the Ka'ba so that all Muslims pray in the direction of Mecca. The whole of Islam can be seen as the spokes on a wheel radiating from the Ka'ba.
- This picture shows the rite of *circumambulation*, one of the rites of the hajj or pilgrimage. The lines inscribed in the pavement are circular as well.





WAY OF LIFE: I

Islam is a way of life in which every aspect of living is covered by the religion and nothing is regarded as secular. The bedrock of Islam is the belief that Allah is the only God and that nothing shares divinity with him, that no person or thing other than Allah deserves worship.





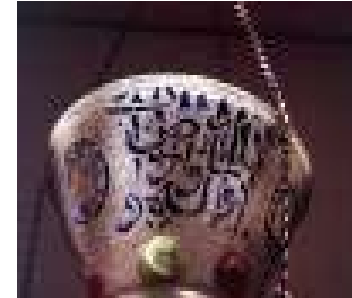
WAY OF LIFE: II

Muslims believe that all laws that govern the universe belong to Allah, that he controls the destiny of all things, including the time and place of each person's birth and death, and that all things, sweet or bitter, issue from Allah.



WAY OF LIFE: III

- Muslim houses of worship are called mosques.
- Religious leaders are called imams.
- Muslims are required to pray five times each day.
- Major day of gathering for teaching and worship each week is Friday (*but this is not considered “Sabbath” in the same way as it is in Judaism or Christianity*).





AFTERLIFE

- Muslims belief in life after death
 - where the righteous will be rewarded with the bliss of paradise,
 - and those who refuse to accept and follow Allah's guidance in this present life will suffer painful punishment in hell fire.





MAJOR DIVISIONS WITHIN ISLAM

- Two major schools of thought in Islam:
 - *Sunni* (SOON-ee)
 - *Shi'a* (SHEE-uh)
 - The origin of these groups centers more on political viewpoints than dogma. Differences in the two movements were defined by early responses to the question "Who leads at the death of Mohammed?"
- A third category known as the *Sufi* movement focuses upon the mystical aspects of Islam and is found among both Sunni and Shi'a communities.
 - Adapted from *The Navy Chaplain*, Oct/Nov 2001



SUNNI ISLAM

- Sunni elders saw Mohammed's successor as chosen by the community of those who follow the *Sunnah* (SOON-nuh) or ethical/religious Muslim path. Authority rests in the community, guided by *ulama* (formal/legalist religious leaders), orthodox consensus. and Islamic law.
- Leaders do not take on the mantle of Mohammed. Rather, they protect and defend Islam, seeking to apply God's law to society. Most Sunnis believe the *Sharia* (religious law of Islam) was codified and closed by the tenth century. Approximately 85 per cent of the Muslim world follows the Sunni branch.

– Adapted from *The Navy Chaplain*, Oct/Nov 2001



SHI'A ISLAM

- Shi'a followers believe Mohammed specified that Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, would be his successor. They believe the charisma of Mohammed passed on in direct blood lineage through a family dynasty. Religious and political authority rests in Imams alone.
- The *Sharia* (Islamic law) is always open, subject to fresh reformulations of *Sunnah*, *Hadith* (traditions of what Mohammed and his companions said and did) and *Quran* interpretations. Found in Iran (95 per cent of the population), southern Iraq, parts of Lebanon and elsewhere, the Shi'a branch makes up roughly 15 percent of the Muslim community.

– Adapted from *The Navy Chaplain*, Oct/Nov 2001



SUFI ISLAM

- Within both *Sunni* and *Shi'a* circles there are branches of mystical/spiritual intensity. The *Sufi* school of thought defines this mystic orientation. *"Like the heart of the body of Islam – invisible from the outside but giving nourishment to the whole organism"* – *Sufi* pietism exerts a major influence. Recalling the austere life of early Mecca arid Medina, *Sufis* often practice ascetic ways. Their living in the presence of God, being "absorbed into God," is often experienced through intense renderings of scripture, poetry or music.

– Adapted from *The Navy Chaplain*, Oct/Nov 2001



“JIHAD”

- In recent years, translated “holy war proclaimed by Muslim leaders.”
- No direct counterpart in Islamic glossary.
- *Jihad*: from Arabic root meaning “strive for a better way of life.”
- Other root meanings: endeavor, strain, diligence; fighting to defend one’s life, land, religion.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- The Navy ChaplainCare website (www.chaplaincare.navy.mil) has a great page on Islam with extensive links to other sites in the “About Various Faiths” section.
- The Navy Chaplain Corps website (www.chaplain.navy.mil) also has a growing page of Islamic resources under the “Faith Groups” menu.



CULTURAL CONCERNS

It's a different world over here



CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



“East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” -- Kipling

- Status
 - Identify by achievement vs. by family
 - Connected to salary or position vs. public “face”
 - Washing your own car considered “beneath” others of similar status
- Criticism
 - “Facts” are irrelevant
 - Objective = Subjective
 - Don’t personalize
- Indirectness
 - Diplomacy and tact are all important
 - Watch for double meaning

Having said all that, I do want to try to highlight some generalities that seem to work over a large part of the area in thinking of some guidelines for life in the Middle East

.(1) No concept of “self-made man”; (2) Status and position are achieved and viewed in very different ways; (3) “Polite” is also viewed differently.



MEETING PEOPLE

- Shaking Hands
 - At every greeting and departure
- Feet
 - Never show the soles of your feet when sitting
 - Says “I’m gonna walk all over you.”
- Impersonal Conversation
 - ANY question about age, family (*esp. female relatives*) impolite in front of others
- Touching
 - Opposite from U.S.
 - Opposite sex contact inappropriate in public
 - May see same-sex contact in public, but does not imply homosexuality

“Polite” has many more rules, subtleties and shadings than we have.



PRIVATE CONVERSATION

- It's different in this part of the world
 - Public discussion of personal matters is usually out-of-bounds
 - Private discussion of personal matters may be essential to success
 - Let Arabs you work with take time to get to know you -- This IS work, not chit-chat.
 - “Real” friendship intense and involves balance of favors and obligations



ARAB HOSPITALITY

- The traditional story of Hatem and his horse is often used to teach the importance of hospitality:
 - “Hatem loved and owned the fastest, most beautiful, most famous horse of his time. One day, a stranger stopped by Hatem’s tent around dinner time. Hatem insisted, despite all protests, that his visitor stay for dinner. After dinner was over, he asked the visitor his business and was told the King wished to have Hatem’s famous stallion. In anguish Hatem revealed that, having nothing else to serve his guest, he had his stallion killed to serve as dinner.” – *Isfahani, 1284-1285 AH*



TIME IS RELATIVE

- Haste makes waste.
 - Western emphasis on speed misinterpreted as insult
- “The meeting is at 1000.”
 - Showing up “on time” can suggest over-eagerness to please the other
 - If 1000 is the time for the meeting, then whenever everyone gets there it will be 1000.
- “However long you think it’ll take, it’ll take longer than that.”



Some other sources of frustration...



“DO YOU UNDERSTAND?”

- The answer will always be “yes.”
- To say “no” carries two implications:
 - The speaker didn’t explain properly
 - Puts the speaker down in public
 - The hearer is not competent
 - Hurts public appearance

“Let your yes be yes and your no be yes.” This can be particularly difficult for clear-speaking military-types like us, who expect to be told the truth. The main thing to remember is that just because someone says “yes” to you doesn’t necessarily mean anything.



“NO” MEANS SO MUCH MORE

- We say “no” all the time
- A flat “no” in Arab culture means:
 - Not only “no” but also
 - you wish to end the relationship
- “The Arab Way” to say “no”:
 - “I’m checking...”
 - “I’ll have to see...”

But, if they do say “no” they really mean “no!”



WHO'S OUT OF LINE?

- Key symptoms of culture shock
 - Swearing at others
 - Saying “they” are too stupid to learn
 - Calling “them” crude
- Just because “they” don’t do something “your” way doesn’t mean that they’re stupid!
- Problem: Having trouble getting through using “the way we’ve always done it” with people who’ve never heard of such a thing.
- Solution: Adapt.

Ah, “who’s the stupid one?” One of the worst things I see happening in too many areas of life is the tendency to decide that someone who doesn’t do it “your way” doesn’t do it the “right way” and is, therefore, stupid.

All too often, the way we’ve always done it, the way that makes so much sense to us, the way that is so obvious even an idiot could see it -- is so totally foreign and different that it is unimaginable to someone with a different cultural background.



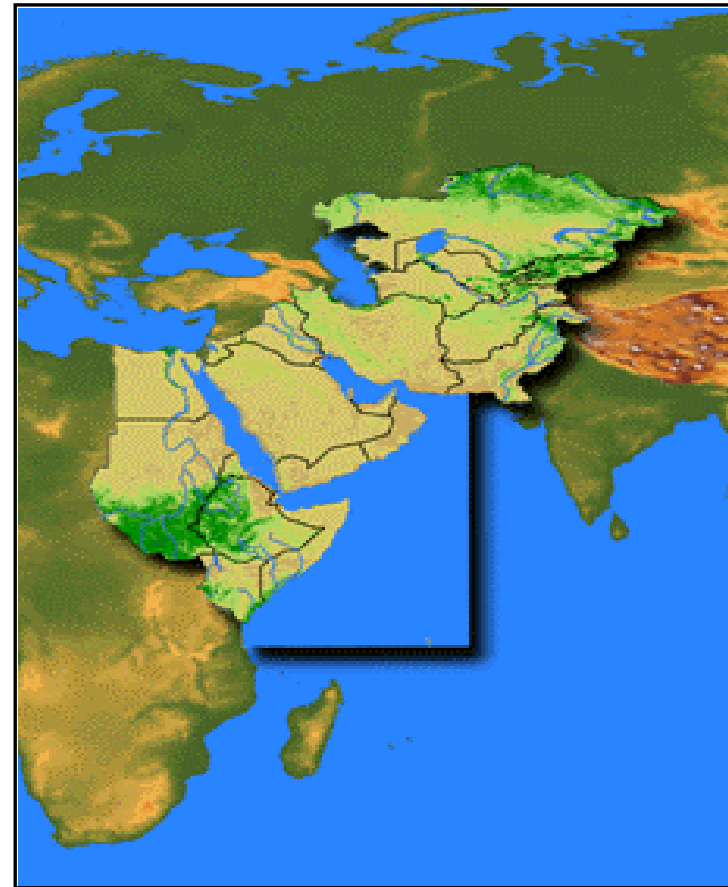
NAVY-SPECIFIC ITEMS OF INTEREST

General Orders, References, and
other information for Navy Personnel
in the NAVCENT AOR



REGIONAL ISSUES

- Israel/Palestine
- AOR Terrorism
- Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF)
- Operation SOUTHERN WATCH (OSW)
- Maritime Interception Operations (MIO)
- Pakistan/India Border





SOME IMPORTANT RULES ON CLOTHES

- CENTCOM and local instructions have very specific rules on attire.
- Generally, all are required to wear shirts with collars, long slacks, no short skirts or sleeveless blouses.
- NO UNIFORMS to/from work.
 - See OPORD 1000-01 for “the rest of the story”



MORE FROM OPORD 1000-01

- “Civilian attire will present a neat, conservative appearance. Clothing will be loose-fitting and concealing. Neither males nor females shall wear shirts or blouses of sheer fabric that could be considered revealing. In concert with Arabic cultural standards, shorts are prohibited in public except when actively engaged in jogging or other sporting events.”
- “Shirts or ball caps with military, political, religious, heavy-metal music, or illegal drug themes or logos shall not be worn.”



BEHAVIOR IS IMPORTANT, TOO

- A good general rule: “if you drink, stay on base.”
 - Public intoxication can get one arrested just as easily as DUI here.
- Photography is a challenge
 - Don’t photograph religious or government facilities.
 - Don’t photograph people without explicit permission
 - Generally, don’t plan to photograph any of the local populace.
- Always stay polite!



RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS

- Be ready for an increased interest in Islam in general and requests for specific support from Muslim personnel
 - Reading materials
 - Provision of space/materials for worship
- Also, may be involved in meeting religious needs of coalition partners or detainees



RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS (cont.)

- The USCENTCOM Chaplain's SIPR Web site at *<http://recluse.centcom.smil.mil/ccch>* has helpful info on religious requirements in this AOR.
 - *NOTE: This is an evolving field and the information may change from time to time.*



OTHER RESOURCES

- NAVCENT/FIFTHFLT's NIPR site is at *www.cusnc.navy.mil*
- Naval Support Activity Bahrain's site is *www.nsa.bahrain.navy.mil*
- The Reserve Liaison Office at NAVCENT maintains a very informative unclassified web site at *www.rlobahrain.navy.mil* with more on culture, religion and other matters in Bahrain.



Briefing prepared in this format by
LCDR W. A. Wildhack III, CHC, USNR
NR COMUSNAVCENT 108
Wildhack.William@chaplain.navy.mil

Material adapted from various sources as credited on various slides. Other material adapted from USCENTCOM Middle East Orientation Course or notes on Arab Culture originally developed by CDR Robert L. Young, CHC, USNR, formerly assigned to NR COMUSNAVCENT 108.